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RECORD OF AN INTERVIEW WITH HERR RUDOLPH HESS

(May 13)

Hess started by saying that he must go back a long way in order to explain the chain of circumstances which had lead to his present decision.

Its origin lay in an English book called "England's Foreign Policy under Edward VII". The author of this book, who was an impartial and reputable historian, admitted that from 1904 on England's policy had been to oppose Germany and to back France. In the certain knowledge that this would lead to a conflict with Germany. Thus England was responsible for the war of 1914.

After the war came the Treaty of Versailles and the failure of the British Government to accord to the democratic system in Germany those concessions which would have enabled it to live. Hence the rise of Hitler and National Socialism.

In 1938, Hitler, after exhausting all peaceful means, was compelled to occupy Austria in conformity with the wishes of the Austrian people.

The Czechoslovak crisis was caused by the French determination, expressed by the French Air Minister, Monsieur Cot, to make Czechoslovakia an air base against Germany. It was Hitler's duty to scotch this plot. The intervention of Mr. Chamberlain and the Munich Conference had been a source of great relief to Hitler. About a fortnight after Munich, however, Mr. Chamberlain had publicly declared that he had only agreed to Munich in order to gain time for England's rearmament. Subsequently the British and French Governments had endeavoured to arm the rump state of Czechoslovakia against Germany. Herr Hitler could not stand this and acted just as any British Government would have done.

The Polish crisis was caused by England's determination to oppose Germany, the strongest power on the Continent. The German Government now knew from captured documents and statements of Poles that the Polish Government would have accepted the German proposals but for the efforts of the British Government to prevent a solution on these lines.

The British designs on Norway justified Hitler's attack on Norway and Denmark; and documents, which proved our intention to invade Germany through Holland and Belgium, justified the attack on the Low Countries.

The conclusion was clear that England was responsible for the present war. After the Polish collapse, Hitler had made a peace offer to France and Britain which had been rejected with scorn. Again, after the collapse of France, he had made another peace offer; and this too had been rejected. There was nothing further for Hitler to do but to pursue the struggle to its logical conclusion.

After this preliminary survey of past history on the lines of Hitler's speeche Herr Hess proceeded to the second part of his discourse, which was intended to prove that Germany must win the war.

He said that German aircraft production was enormous; much larger than that of Great Britain and America combined. The Germans knew all about U.S.production and a good deal about ours. They did not fear U.S.aircraft. Fast training schemes were in hand and the next few months would see a noticeable expansion in the German Air Force. At present numbers of trained pilots and completed machines were not even being used. Losses had been light, far lighter than had been anticipated. Whatever efforts Great Britain might make she would never

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H3789 – 0003

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H3789 - 0004



alter the present proportion between the German and British Air Forces. When in May last year, Great Britain started bombing Germany, Herr Hitler had believed that this was a momentary aberration, and, with exemplary patience, he had waited, partly so as to spare the world the horrors of unrestricted air warfare, and partly out of a sentimental regard for English culture and English monuments. It was only with the greatest reluctance that, after many weeks of waiting, he had given the order to bomb England.

As regards the Battle of the Atlantic, submarines were now being constructed in large numbers all over Germany. Submarine parts were even being built in occupied territory and the waterways of Germany were being used to transport the parts for assembly on the coast. Along some waterways completed submarines were being delivered to be commissioned. At the same time, crews were being trained on a huge scale. We must, therefore, expect that very shortly we should have to deal with a vastly increased number of submarines, working in co-operation with aircraft against our shipping.

As regards raw materials, Germany had acquired enormous resources in occupied territory. For example, in France alone they had captured thousands of barrels for anti-aircraft guns, which were now being adapted for German anti-aircraft units. Oil and raw materials were available in abundance. The only embarrassing shortage was the shortage of fat, and this was being overcome by various expedients.

Finally, there was not the slightest hope of bringing about a revolution in Germany. Hitler possesses the blindest confidence of the German masses.

The third and shortest part of the discourse was devoted to the reasons which had brought him here and the proposals which he had to make. He said that horrified at the prospect of the prolongation of the struggle, he had come here without the knowledge of Hitler in order to convince responsible persons that since England could not win the war, the wisest course was to make peace now. From a long and intimate knowledge of the Fuhrer which had begun eighteen years ago in the fortress of Landsberg, he could give his word of honour that the Fuhrer had never entertained any designs against the British Empire. Nor had he ever aspired to world domination. He believed that Germany's sphere of interest was in Europe and that any dissipation of Germany's strength beyond Europe's frontiers would be a weakness and would carry with it the seeds of Germany's destruction. Hitler would sincerely regret the collapse of the British Empire. At this point Hess tried to make my flesh creep by emphasising that the avaricious Americans had fell designs on the Empire. Canada would certainly be incorporated in the U.S.

Reverting to Hitler's attitude, he said that only as recently as May 3rd after his Reichstag speech, Hitler had declared to him that he had no oppressive demands to make of England.

The solution which Herr Hess proposed was that England should give Germany a free hand in Europe, and Germany would give England a completely free hand in the Empire, with the sole reservation that we should return Germany's ex-colonies, which she required as a source of raw materials. I asked, in order to draw him on the subject of Hitler's attitude to Russia, whether he included Russia in Europe or in Asia. He replied "In Asia". I then retorted that under the terms of his proposal, since Germany would only have a free hand in Europe, she would not be at liberty to attack Russia. Herr Hess reacted quickly by remarking that Germany had certain demands to make of Russia which would have to be satisfied, either by negotiation or as the result of a war. He added, however, that there was no foundation for the rumours now being spread that Hitler was contemplating an early attack on Russia.

I then asked about Italian aims and he said that he did not know them. I replied that it was a matter of some importance. He brushed this aside and



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H3789 - 0005



said that he was sure that Italy's claims would not be excessive. I suggested that Italy scarcely deserved anything, but he begged to differ. Italy had rendered considerable services to Germany, and besides England had compensated defeated nations like Rumania after the last war.

Finally, as we were leaving the room, Herr Hess delivered a parting shot. He had forgotten, he declared, to emphasise that the proposal could only be considered on the understanding that it was negotiated by Germany with an English Government other than the present British Government. Mr. Churchill, who had planned the war since 1936, and his colleagues who had lent themselves to his war policy, were not persons with whom the Fuhrer could negotiate.

The above statement took about two hours and a quarter to make. At intervals I made a mild protest against some of Herr Hess's more ludicrous statements; and I occasionally threw a fly over him in order to induce him to develop a point which seemed of interest. But, in general, I allowed even the most outrageous remarks to pass unanswered, since I realised that argument would be quite fruitless and would certainly have deprived us of our breakfast.

22nd January 1946.

Certified that the text set out above and entitled "Record of an Interview with Herr Rudolf Hess (May 13th)" is a true copy of a document held in the files of H.M.Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, London.

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Deputy Chief Prosecutor for the United Kingdom

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H3789 – 0007

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